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Citation for final published version:

Nicholson, Paul T. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5472-6788> and Mills, Steve ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5748-0613> 2017. Soldier tourism in First World War Egypt and Palestine: the evidence of photography. *Journal of Tourism History* 9 (2-3) , pp. 205-222. 10.1080/1755182X.2017.1410582 file

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2017.1410582>  
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2017.1410582>>

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# Soldier tourism in First World War Egypt and Palestine: the evidence of photography

Paul T. Nicholson and Steve Mills

## Abstract

During the First World War many British and Imperial soldiers serving in Egypt and Palestine took photographs or bought postcards to send or take home showing the places they had visited. As the conflict unfolded, military service there might be viewed as a kind of ‘enforced tourism’ wherein soldiers followed tourist routes and took photographs in ways closely related to those of peace-time visitors. The *Views of an Antique Land* project has collected approximately 2000 such images and is making them available online creating an important resource for our understanding of visitors and their interests in the early twentieth century. In addition, it will be a resource for those whose ancestors served in those areas and provide a record of the ancient monuments as they appeared at a particular point in time.

## Keywords

First World War; Archaeology; Photography; Egypt; Palestine; Postcards

## Introduction

Surprisingly little has been written on so-called ‘soldier photography’ during the First World War. There are, however, some notable exceptions such as the works by Carmichael and Holborn and Roberts,<sup>1</sup> but these concentrate primarily on photography on the Western Front. The focus of attention on the experiences of those serving in Europe is unsurprising, the Western Front looms large in the public’s perceptions of the Great War and the image of mud, stagnation and destruction on that Front is deeply ingrained. From December 1914 photography by soldiers was officially banned (see below) and whilst the ban was not as strictly adhered to as the War Office would have wished, it did have the effect of substantially reducing soldier-photography. In consequence of this ban photography was taken over by Official War Photographers and these too concentrated on the Western Front.

What is less commonly known is that the ban on photography in the East was not closely adhered to and whilst there are only some 600 Official photographs of the Palestine theatre,<sup>2 3</sup> many hundreds were either taken by soldiers themselves or were purchased as postcards by those serving in Egypt and Palestine. This paper draws on a Heritage Lottery Funded project – *Views of an Antique Land* (hereafter VAL) – which has sought to collect and interpret images taken and bought by British personnel serving in Egypt and Palestine during the First World War. Approximately 2000 images have been collected, most of them photographs by service personnel themselves, and are being uploaded to the project online archive at <https://www.imagesegypt.mukurtu.net/>.

The conflict in Egypt and Palestine was a significant theatre of battle for all sides and all personnel that served in the campaign deserve commemoration equally. The VAL project

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Carmichael, *First World War Photographers* (London: Routledge, 1989); Mark Holborn and Hilary Roberts, *The Great War: A Photographic Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Carmichael, *First World War Photographers*, 142.

<sup>3</sup> The Palestine theatre is the term generally used to refer to the conflict in Egypt and Palestine.

hoped to contribute to this aim by creating an online resource of previously unavailable images taken by British serving personnel. Through a series of roadshows in England and Wales, the VAL project invited members of the public to bring in their collections of photographs taken and collected by their ancestors which were then scanned. Focussing exclusively on British serving personnel who set out from and returned to Britain during the conflict in Egypt and Palestine provides the opportunity to complement existing collections of images already available online, such as those by the Australian War Memorial commemorating the Australian and New Zealand Corps. While photographs by and of Ottoman troops during the conflict are rarer, some are available online including a number housed by the Library of Congress as part of the John Whiting collection<sup>4</sup>.

The images collected by VAL not only draw on the themes of comrades, weapons and destruction within soldier photography as described for the Western Front but also introduce new elements. These new elements are perhaps particularly relevant to studies of tourism. It is also clear that some of the views photographed follow particular itineraries and that military service in Egypt and the Holy Land might be viewed as a kind of ‘enforced tourism’ within which soldiers bought postcards, took photographs and followed tourist routes in ways closely related to those of peace-time visitors.

### **‘Soldier-photography’**

The term ‘soldier-photography’ has been used as a convenient short-hand to describe those images taken by soldiers themselves whilst on active service.<sup>5</sup> The pre-war popularity of amateur photography meant that when war broke out many of those who volunteered to serve already owned cameras and had the ability to use them, some of them very well. They were also aware that they were about to take part in what they knew was to be a great adventure and one which was not expected to last long. They took their cameras to war with the expectation that they would record their part in history, literally a snapshot in time. Many were also used to taking their cameras with them on holiday and so had a knowledge of photography, whilst others were serious amateurs with a good deal of experience in the medium.

The most popular camera of the war amongst ordinary soldiers was the *Kodak Vest Pocket* camera or ‘VPK’ introduced in 1912<sup>6</sup> and, despite the ban on photography it was marketed as ‘the soldier’s *Kodak*’ from 1915 at which point it also became the ‘Autographic’ VPK meaning that a small window on the back could be opened and a title or reference number could be scratched onto the film emulsion for ease of identification later. Images seem to have been processed in several ways; they might be sent or brought home and developed in Britain, they might be sent to commercial studio near to where the soldier served or, one suspects, that they were sometimes processed illicitly by those with access to military darkrooms.

In the first weeks and months of the war several soldiers serving on the Western Front sent home pictures for publication in newspapers and magazines. The press were eager to have images to accompany their coverage of the war and often paid well for such pictures. However, the images were uncensored and of potential use to the enemy. There was also a concern in official circles that soldiers might be tempted to take photographs for sale rather than take a

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<sup>4</sup> Library of Congress “Visual materials from the papers of John D. Whiting,” [https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/629\\_whiting.html](https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/629_whiting.html)

<sup>5</sup> The term has been used by BBC4’s *Hidden Histories: WWI’s Forgotten Photographs*, first broadcast 13-3-2014.

<sup>6</sup> Robert White, *Discovering Old Cameras* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 2001); Kate Rouse *Classic Cameras* (Royston: Eagle Editions, 2002).

full part in the fighting. A soldier writing under the name “Medico” submitted an article to *Amateur Photographer* magazine<sup>7</sup> on how to take the best images and suggested topics, including what not to photograph. His suggestions on what to avoid included the ‘seamy side’ of war.<sup>8</sup> His article appeared in the magazine shortly after the official ban on photography by soldiers issued as General Order No.464 on December 22 1914 and reissued on several subsequent occasions and one wonders if some of those who later took photographs were influenced by Medico.

What is clear is that the General Order, although punishable by Courts Martial, was sometimes ‘overlooked’ and perhaps nowhere more so than in the Palestine theatre. The VAL project has uncovered evidence that officers quite openly ignored the ban. For example, on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1917 Major H.J. Butchart sent an order to *Kodak* at Opera Square, Cairo for 6 rolls of film, each of 6 exposures, for his *Autographic Kodak Junior*<sup>9</sup>. The order was sent on official military paper in a duplicating order book, hence the copy of the order survives. Furthermore, it was to be sent to ‘H.Q. 74<sup>th</sup> Division EEF’. The Major was apparently unconcerned that he might be committing an offence and he was certainly not alone in this. The request also asks the *Kodak* shop to keep the balance of his payment suggesting that further orders might be forthcoming. It is also possible that some of the film processing was done by the dealership. VAL has collected many images taken by officers and other ranks, and some of these include other officers who must therefore have been aware that they were being photographed.

It may be that in the East in particular there was an awareness that their war was not getting the official coverage that it might, but there were, perhaps, also other factors. One of these factors might be location. The service personnel seem to have been acutely aware that they were fighting in the lands of the Bible. For people, many of whom would not normally have had the opportunity or need to go abroad, this was a truly great adventure and they were aware of the history that surrounded them. Those of a religious background must have had a great awareness that they were in some sense following in the steps of Christ, a theme which is again taken up during the Second World War when books such as H.V. Morton’s *In the Footsteps of the Master* were re-issued and some condensed and amended for the particular benefit of those serving in Egypt and the Holy Land.<sup>10</sup> Most notable amongst Morton’s output was his *Middle East* which was specifically aimed at those serving there.<sup>11</sup> In this sense there was sometimes an element of pilgrimage amongst the places visited by these enforced tourists. Some soldiers showed an awareness of the historical context of their journeys, for example Herbert Standen provided a hand drawn map with the caption:

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<sup>7</sup> “Medico”, “Photography at the front. Some practical notes by one who has been there,” *The Amateur Photographer and Photographic News*, March 22, 1915, 227-228. Whilst this paper concentrates on photography by British service personnel it should be noted that German soldiers were also making images, though largely on the Western Front since relatively few served in the East. Publications served a similar role to that of “Medico” for example Soldat Hubmann, “Gebote für Liebhaberphotographen im Felde,” *Photographie für Alle. Zeitschrift für alle Zweige der Photographie*, 1916 5 (3): 38ff.

<sup>8</sup> “Medico”, “Photography”, 228.

<sup>9</sup> Model 1a

<sup>10</sup> Henry Vollam Morton, *In the Steps of the Master* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1934 subsequently published by Methuen from 1937 and throughout WWII). It is worth noting that, after the war, when a correspondent for the *Daily Express*, Morton did his bit to encourage tourism in Egypt by reporting on the excavation of Tutankhamun’s tomb. He was a friend of the reporter, archaeologist and writer Arthur Weigall and features in the latter’s biography, see: Julie Hankey, *A Passion for Egypt: A Biography of Arthur Weigall* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Henry Vollam Morton, *Middle East* (London: Methuen, 1941).

The old caravan route across Sinai, used by traders between Asia and Africa since the beginning of time. Just a chain of oasis in the desert, it has been trodden by the armies of the Pharaohs, the Assyrians, Alexander, and Napoleon, and last of all, by the British Army.<sup>12</sup>

[Figure 1 here]

Similarly, Pte. Evan Jones sent a letter home for publication in a local newspaper in which he talks of being in the 'Promised Land' but assures his readers that 'I do not envy those to whom it was promised and am quite willing to quit it in their favour'. He goes on to say 'One place we stopped at there was a salt-water lake, and I believe that Lot's wife's transformation into salt took place close by, so I expect that accounts for the water being so beastly salty'.<sup>13</sup> His comments, though clearly jocular show a good knowledge of Bible history and he and his comrades clearly knew the ground over which they were moving and the places they were visiting.

### Postcards

For those who did not own cameras, or who were concerned by the ban on photography, there was the opportunity to purchase postcards. A few of these concern military events and are marked as 'Official Photograph', for example showing captured Ottoman positions, military parades or the like but the great majority are of places and people. Some were specially produced for soldiers serving in Egypt. The *Beagles* company was particularly prominent in this market frequently producing cards which bore a sentimental verse for those at home along with a picture of a soldier, sometimes at his writing desk, along with an image or images of some part of Egypt. Soldiers were alerted to the existence of the *Beagles* cards by prominent adverts in guidebooks which were available to soldiers through local stationers. For example, *Alexandria: How to See It*, published in 1917 carries the words:

SOLDIERS, When you arrive in Egypt, the fascinating land of the Pharaohs, the first thing you have to do is to buy souvenir-cards of Egypt and send them to your people and friends at home. **Beagles Ltd.** of London have thought of your need...

and the advert goes on to say where such essential cards can be obtained in Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the images of Egypt used by *Beagles* on their cards predate the war. For example, one showing a soldier at his writing desk with the Cairo Citadel in the background is an image made by the company *Underwood and Underwood* of Ottawa, Kansas, who were makers of stereoscopic views and suppliers of images for publications.

However, views made especially for the military market account for only a few of those available to soldiers and most sent home the traditional black and white, or sometimes coloured,<sup>15</sup> images of the tourist sites<sup>16</sup>. Where postcards have been written on (and many were

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<sup>12</sup> Personal photographic album of Herbert Standen.

<sup>13</sup> Evan Jones, "Seven Sisters," *Llais Llafur - The Labour Voice*, number 1037, Saturday 10 November 1917.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander R. Khoori, *Alexandria: How to See It* (Alexandria: Anglo-Egyptian Supply Association, 1917).

<sup>15</sup> These are not actual colour photographs but images which have been mechanically over-printed in colour.

<sup>16</sup> There were numerous producers of postcards in Egypt and the Holy Land, many of the photographers having emigrated there from elsewhere. See David Low *Framing the Armenian Genocide*. (Courtauld Institute, Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2015).



sent back without annotations, presumably accompanying a letter) it is not always clear whether the soldier had himself visited the site concerned or whether this was simply a postcard of a local view. Sometimes, however, we have an indication that the writer had indeed been to the site, and this is particularly true of views in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

One of the aims of the VAL project has been to obtain a series of images which show what Egypt and Palestine were like in the years 1914-1918 both to serve as a resource for those whose ancestors served in those areas and to provide a record of the ancient monuments as they appeared at a particular point in time. In this latter respect the postcards can be problematic in that they often reproduce images which were already old at the time of the war. Postcard producers, it seems, are often slow to renew images.<sup>17</sup> However, if used with some caution it is apparent what the main tourist attractions of the time were considered to be and these, along with soldier-photographs, can often be linked to set itineraries.

The photographs taken by soldiers themselves have the advantage that it is obvious that the soldier who took them, usually the same person who made the album or collection, was present and sometimes we have the date making them an especially valuable resource.

### **Tourist Photographs**

The idea that the war might be a great adventure, particularly amongst those who had not previously had the opportunity to travel, is hinted at by “Medico” in his *Amateur Photographer* article where he advises ‘Don’t use nearly all your film on the journey out, tempting as the subjects are; you will get better ones later on’.<sup>18</sup> He had experienced soldiers taking too many pictures of their comrades as they relaxed on the deck of the troop ship as if they were taking a cruise! In point of fact, the journey to the Middle East must have had something of the air of a cruise with soldiers being transferred from Britain or the Western Front though the Mediterranean, sometimes via Malta, and on to land at Alexandria or Port Said. Photographs on board ship are not uncommon and there is an atmosphere of relaxation rather than of apprehension about them.

[Figure 2 here]

The holiday atmosphere is sometimes added to by photographs showing soldiers relaxing at the beach. Many collections show a soldier’s comrades swimming, usually in the sea but sometimes in a river or canal. Often these were unstructured ‘leave’ activities but at other times they were slightly more formal – for example a swimming race between different ethnicities. It should be noted that in looking at the images collected by VAL, as well as the occasional comments with them, that whilst white British soldiers were clearly aware of racial differences the overwhelming impression given is one of respect for fellow soldiers and respect for, and/or interest in local people. The language used might now be regarded as ‘casually racist’ but it is very much of its time and does not necessarily imply condescension toward or assumed superiority over other ethnicities.

[Figure 3 here]

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<sup>17</sup> One of the writers (Nicholson) noted this when making visits to Egypt in the 1980s when postcards frequently showed images of the temple at Philae partially submerged by the waters behind the Aswan Dam, despite the fact that the temple had been moved to dry land in the 1960s.

<sup>18</sup> “Medico”, “Photography”, 228.

The kinds of photographs taken by service personnel of local peoples are interesting in that they tend to mimic the sorts of views which were also available as postcards – the exception being photographs of semi-clothed women which often feature in postcard sets where they might feature as ‘femme arabe’ or ‘a local beauty’. In the Middle East these ‘Oriental’<sup>19</sup> views took the place of the so-called ‘French Postcards’<sup>20</sup> which were circulating on the Western Front and yet had an air of respectability as being ethnographic – even if most were entirely staged. The comparison with the ‘French Postcard’ is perhaps particularly appropriate since some of the latter were issued in sets, beginning with a fully clad individual and ending with a naked one. Whilst sets of ‘Oriental’ portraits of this sort are not common, they do feature both clad and semi-clad individuals. Interestingly, because these were considered ‘Oriental’ or ‘ethnographic’ in nature they were considered suitable to be sent home to members of both genders. It may be that those at home were not offended by such views because of the established culture of orientalism which was already expressed in aspects of advertising and in commercial art.

[Figure 4 a & b here]

The kinds of people who feature on photographs are sometimes officials, policemen are frequent subjects, recording a person undertaking a familiar activity but wearing an unfamiliar and exotic uniform. Water carriers are common subjects too and there are some pictures of local women either included in street scenes or as candid portraits. Children are also a common subject, perhaps because they were easily photographed and wanted to pose for the camera but also, perhaps, because they were outside the adult world of conflict and were a reminder of children or brothers and sisters back home. Some of these pictures of people in local dress may have been reminders of the kinds of scenes which soldiers were familiar with from illustrated Bibles or from Sunday School pictures and the opportunity to show those at home that this view of the orient remained a truthful one would have been hard to resist.

Also featured amongst the collections are images of Indian troops. Many of those serving in the Palestine theatre were from Indian regiments and their exotic appearance, as well as their courage and ability to work in the heat of the region, evidently impressed photographers.

Amongst the photographs of what might be described as ‘local colour’ are many showing transport. Inevitably, camels feature very commonly either carrying loads or driving water-lifting devices. They also feature frequently in pictures of soldiers when visiting the pyramids (below). In fact camels have a particular role in the tourist experience of Egypt and, along with the pyramids, are intimately linked to that country despite the fact that they were unknown for most of ancient Egyptian history. So ingrained was the view that camels and Egypt go together that when the Sopwith aviation company produced their 1000<sup>th</sup> *Sopwith Camel* fighter aircraft it was painted with ancient Egyptian designs.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Helmut Schmidt, “Boudoir cards. Vintage postcards of the Belle Epoque,” <http://www.helmut-schmidt-online.de/Boudoir-Cards/bc-oriental-postcards.html>

<sup>20</sup> Sun Liying, “An exotic self? – Tracing cultural flows of western nudes in *Pei-Yang Pictorial News* (1926-1933),” in *Transcultural Turbulences: toward a multi-sited reading of image flows*, eds. C. Brosius and R. Wenzlhuemer (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2011), 276. Martin Willoughby, *A History of Postcards* (London: Bracken Books, 1994), 111. Nigel Sandler, *Erotic Postcards of the Early Twentieth Century* (Stroud: Amberley, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Jarrod Cotter, *Sopwith Camel 1916-20 (F.1/2F.1) Owner’s Workshop Manual* (Yeovil: Haynes, 2016), 146-7.

Trains and trams also feature, again familiar modes of transport but in an unfamiliar setting. Whilst these might occasionally feature as part of a street scene in a commercial postcard they are less commonly the main feature of such a view. The impression given is that soldiers are documenting the new world around them as might any tourist in a new place.

Many of the views feature particular friends, on camels, in exotic street scenes or at archaeological sites. It is clear that the comradeship is important and that there is a desire to record these friendships in an exotic setting for posterity. It should not be forgotten that for many service personnel serving alongside Indian troops, working with Chinese labourers and living amongst Egyptians or Palestinians would have been their first encounter with people from outside their own white-British community. The sense of the exotic, and the desire to share it with those at home who had no experience of it, cannot be over-emphasised.

### **‘Enforced Tourists’ and their itineraries**

That guidebooks were available to soldiers has already been mentioned. Many, such as that for Alexandria, were cheaply produced and fairly ephemeral publications giving a map and some basic information on local sights. The Alexandria example cost only 6 piastres in 1917, the equivalent of about 1s 3d in British currency of the time<sup>22</sup> and so well within the reach of the ordinary soldier, the lowest pay rate for whom was 7s per week<sup>23</sup>. Similar guides were available for other parts of Egypt and sometimes offered the visitor a particular itinerary or allowed them to work out for themselves what sights could conveniently be seen within a short period of leave. Australian soldiers might purchase, for 1 piastre, a copy of Bean’s *What to know in Egypt: A guide for Australian soldiers*<sup>24</sup> which, as well as attempting to deter visits to disreputable local ladies, suggested places to visit and the means by which they could be reached. Officers in particular might have had access to some of the pre-war guidebooks produced to cover Egypt and the Holy Land by companies such as that of Karl Baedeker<sup>25</sup> or Thomas Cook<sup>26</sup>. Even if no paper guide was available there were local ‘dragomen’, guide-interpreters who would, for a fee, show visitors the sites or advise them on how to make their visit. Such local guides became familiar with the usual tourist routes of the pre-war era and so would have seen the massive number of service personnel as a potential market. What the common soldier lacked in terms of overall wealth might be compensated for by sheer numbers and perhaps by a lack of knowledge of local prices.

Perhaps the most common short itinerary for many soldiers serving in Egypt would be a day out at the Giza pyramids. This would be particularly easy for those troops stationed in one of the camps, such as the Mena Camp, which were located at the foot of the Giza plateau. These included ANZAC troops as well as some from Britain. From such camps it would be an easy walk onto the plateau where, much as today, numerous guides both official and unofficial were available for hire. One of their most significant functions would have been to arrange for the, almost obligatory, camel ride. With the exception of those serving in the Imperial Camel Corps, most soldiers would not ordinarily have the opportunity to ride a camel and the urge to

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<sup>22</sup> Currency conversions are difficult to obtain, but the Baedeker guides to Egypt for 1914 gives the piastre a value of 2½d.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Doyle, *The British Soldier of the First World War* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2008), 20. For the wide range of rates see <https://rapc-association.org.uk/pay-services-history/ww1/pay-rates-1914.html>

<sup>24</sup> Charles Edwin Woodow Bean, *What to Know in Egypt: A Guide for Australian Soldiers*. (Cairo: Societe Orientale Publicite, 1915).

<sup>25</sup> For example Karl Baedeker, *Egypt and the Sudan*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edn (Leipzig: Baedeker, 1914).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Cook, *Cook’s Tourists’ Handbook to Egypt, the Nile and the Desert* (London: Thomas Cook and Son, 1897).



do so would be as hard to resist as it is for many visitors today. Photographs taken by soldiers of their friends on such camel outings have already been mentioned, but there is another kind of photograph where soldiers, dragoman and professional photographer came together, namely the staged image of the soldier and his comrades, seated on camels with the Sphinx and a pyramid in the background.

[Figure 5 here]

This provided an opportunity for soldiers who did not themselves own a camera to record a visit to the pyramids with their friends, something to send home to friends and family which was a personalised record of the kind of tourist experience which only a few years before would have been well beyond their resources, the preserve of the wealthy middle and upper classes. Such photographs would normally be taken by a local photographer who would have an agreement with one of the dragomen/camel drivers (the two might often be synonymous). Groups of soldiers would be brought to the Sphinx and there be offered the chance of a photograph posed on their camels and including the dragoman for added local colour. Many dozens of such photographs might be taken in a day and the photographer is usually careful to include a number card beside the dragoman so that the particular group in the picture can be identified and the image brought to the camp for sale later in the day, or so that the subject can visit the photographers shop and purchase it there. This is probably an extension of a pre-war practice and a variant on the same theme was still current into the 1990s when visitors would be photographed at sites and then the images brought to their hotels for sale in the evening.

It is worth noting that these local photographers also seem to have been permitted to come into the camps to take photographs. These generally show groups of soldiers relaxing together or performing some domestic activity such as shaving in front of their tents. The image might then be stamped with an appropriate wording such as 'Souvenir of Egypt 1917' ready to be sent back home. Since photographic paper was commonly available in post-card size and with a pre-printed postcard back this, like the camel photograph, was a good opportunity to have a bespoke image even if the purchaser did not possess a camera of his own. Humphreys notes that near the camp there sprang up 'a whole makeshift township...serving the troops with food, coffee, liquor and postcards'.<sup>27</sup>

The actual route which a soldier might take around the Giza pyramids would have depended upon the time available, on resources if he were paying a guide, and on his interest. For many it would have been enough to have a camel ride from the Great Pyramid to the Sphinx in order to pose for a photograph before heading back to the Great Pyramid, perhaps via the pyramid of Khephren. Soldiers would commonly have visited the interior of the Great Pyramid, but photography there would have been exceptionally difficult and the VAL project has uncovered no images taken inside. A visit to the pyramids was probably the top of most soldiers tourist itineraries and would be undertaken as soon as possible once they were located in suitable proximity. Other visits might require more planning.

One of Egypt's greatest hotels, the Mena House along with the Heliopolis Palace, was requisitioned by the army for use as a hospital.<sup>28</sup> Soldiers, some of whom had been wounded at Gallipoli, evidently made excursions to the pyramids during their period of convalescence

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt in the Golden Age of Travel* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2015), 114.

<sup>28</sup> Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt*, 68.

and the VAL project has a photograph from May 1916 showing sixty-three such soldiers from the hospital making just such a visit.

[Figure 6 here]

A relatively easy trip would be from Giza into central Cairo where popular places to visit were Ezbekiah Gardens and the Cairo Zoo. There was a tram service along the Pyramids Road into Cairo and this would have been very effective for those with short leave passes.<sup>29</sup> Both the zoo and the gardens survive, but in the early 1900s Ezbekiah was a particularly attractive garden with places to eat and drink around it, a place to relax in the sun amongst unusual plants and a popular place with service personnel in both World Wars, perhaps because it offered a haven of peace at a time of conflict. The area around the gardens and adjoining Opera Square was also home to some of the great hotels of Cairo, including the Grand Continental and the Shepherd's Hotel. These two establishments were particularly popular lodgings for officers.<sup>30</sup> In fact Humphreys states that after the evacuation from Gallipoli in December 1915 the Shepherd's Hotel hosted 'over two hundred generals'.<sup>31</sup> Photographs of Ezbekiah taken by soldiers are not uncommon and it also features in postcards. The Cairo Zoo was similarly popular. Zoos were fashionable attractions for a day out in Britain and so would provide an experience which would have been familiar to many soldiers, albeit with the Cairo Zoo perhaps featuring animals with which they were less familiar. That said, it is the hippopotamus and crocodile which feature most commonly in photographs perhaps because of their connection with Egypt.

Photographs of domestic animals feature commonly too. These are not only the horses and camels which were used by the military but also farm animals encountered by soldiers behind the front lines and which again may have offered a view of normality at a time of conflict.

For those who wished to go beyond the zoo and the gardens in Cairo there were slightly more adventurous destinations into the area which is generally known as Heliopolis, itself of interest as a 'new city of hotels and villas founded in 1905'.<sup>32</sup> Some service personnel were already based in the area since there was an airfield there and aircraft servicing facilities for the Royal Flying Corps as well as a camp for Turkish prisoners of war, but for many it would have meant a trip from Giza or elsewhere. The collections of photographs and postcards make it clear that these 'enforced tourists' were taking a pre-war itinerary. Three locations were particularly grouped together and could easily be visited in the same day by a group who had transport of some kind. The attractions of Heliopolis were well covered by Ward in his *Pyramids and Progress* which appeared only a few years before the war.<sup>33</sup>

The first of the attractions on what might be called the 'Heliopolis itinerary' was the obelisk of Senusret I (1965-1920 B.C.) at Matariyah. Standing some 20.4m tall and weighing 121 tons this was an impressive sight and for many British troops would have called to mind the famous Cleopatra's needle on the Thames embankment in London. While it might be thought that this offered a chance to see an obelisk in its original setting, those at Luxor and Karnak are perhaps more likely to be viewed in that way. The Matariyah obelisk is in fact a good example of the way in which tourist itineraries change over time. In the period 1914-18 the obelisk stood in

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<sup>29</sup> Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt*, 114.

<sup>30</sup> Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt*, 68.

<sup>31</sup> Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt*, 92.

<sup>32</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, *Turkish Prisoners in Egypt* (London: Cassell, 1917), 4.

<sup>33</sup> John Ward, *Pyramids and Progress: sketches from Egypt* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900).

the midst of fields, the temple with which it was associated buried beneath them. It would have been an excursion into the countryside toward the edge of Cairo, though the new suburb of Heliopolis was nearby and was continuing to expand. The obelisk is extremely well documented in postcards from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century into the 1920s but then gradually falls from popularity as the area surrounding it becomes more built up and less picturesque and as new discoveries elsewhere in Egypt are added to the tourist itinerary at the expense of the obelisk. Today it is visited only by the most dedicated Egyptophiles and by students of Egyptology. The photographs taken by soldiers provide a well dated record of the monument, postcard pictures of which were re-cycled over a very long period.

On the same day trip, visitors would also go to see the 'Virgin's Tree', an ancient sycamore where in Egyptian legend the Virgin and child are said to have taken shelter during their flight into Egypt. The tree is located near the Chapel of the Holy Family. For a generation who would have studied scripture at school, and many of whom would have attended Sunday schools in addition, knowledge of the Bible was considerably greater than it is today and this would have been an opportunity to visit a holy site. Like the obelisk, it is a frequent subject for postcard photographers and is to be seen in images taken by the servicemen themselves.

[Figure 7 a, b & c here]

A visit to Heliopolis might be rounded off by a visit to the Ostrich farm. This too is a common subject for postcard producers and amateur photographers. The concept of farming ostrich was, to most Europeans, very unusual and exotic and the chance to view these birds – and their enormous eggs – at close quarters was not to be missed. So popular was the farm that it features on Baedeker's map of the environs of Cairo.<sup>34</sup> Local guides would have been familiar with all three locations, but soldiers who had bought guidebooks would equally have been able to reach these places themselves by taxi or other local transport.

Islamic monuments were also visited by the troops. It is not clear how far they associated the mosques with the Ottomans with whom they were at war. One suspects that because Egypt had for some time been in the Anglo-French sphere of influence, informally from 1882 and formally a British protectorate from 1914 (to 1922), these monuments were seen as 'Egyptian' or 'Arab' rather than being associated with the Ottomans *per se*. Whatever the case, some of them were regularly visited, particularly those of Sultan Hasan and Sultan Barquq. Views of the former from the Citadel are common, though, curiously, views of the mosque of Mohammed Ali at the Citadel are slightly less common amongst the images collected by VAL even though some soldiers visited there.

Moving north to Alexandria, the other great city at which many troops were based, similar patterns are encountered. Mosques, especially that of Nabi Daniel were amongst the sights to be seen along with 'Pompey's Pillar' <sup>35</sup> and the Catacombs of the Serapion (Serapeum).<sup>36</sup> Postcards of the time showing famous streets and buildings in Alexandria generally include views of the Ramleh Casino and the Bourse, though they are less commonly represented in

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<sup>34</sup> Baedeker, *Egypt* (Leipzig: Baedeker, 1929), opp. 126. Environs of Cairo map. Note however, that though the farm is described in some earlier editions it is not always on the map, whereas the reverse is true of the 1929 book.

<sup>35</sup> This in fact has no connection with Pompey but was erected by the Roman emperor Diocletian in A.D. 297 close to the site of the Serapion.

<sup>36</sup> A distinction is usually made between the burial place of the Apis bull at Saqqara which is known as the Serapeum and the cult centre of Serapis at Alexandria which is the Serapion though both are often referred to under the term 'Serapeum'.

soldier photographs, possibly because most would not have cause or resources to visit them. Views around the Qait Bey fortress are more common in the photographs taken by the soldiers.

One of the military camps was close to the ruins of ancient Aboukir and at least one of the soldiers photographed there, carefully noting the position of 'Cleopatra's bath' a feature which he had presumably learned of from a local guide. The site is, however, not well documented in photographs and may have been visited only by the keenest soldiers or those who had a long term posting around Alexandria.

There are two other major areas for visitors to Egypt, namely the ancient sites around Luxor and those around Aswan. These would have been beyond the reach of most soldiers who, having arrived at Alexandria or Port Said, might get to see the sights in those places and perhaps venture to or be stationed at Cairo before being moved through Sinai and into Palestine. However, some soldiers were moved through or stationed in the south, some *en route* to Sudan where in 1916 it was felt necessary to put down an insurrection by the Sultan of Darfur which subsequently became incorporated into the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The famous *Winter Palace* hotel at Luxor was taken over for use as a convalescent home and no doubt some recovering soldiers would have made use of the opportunity to visit sites. Indeed some might have taken the opportunity to talk to archaeologists who, from 1917, were also using the hotel as they had before the war.<sup>37</sup>

Those 'fortunate'<sup>38</sup> enough to be posted to, or have access to Luxor and Aswan had a vast array of monuments which could be visited. However, Luxor in particular had been a centre for visitors since Roman times and supported a culture of dragomans and sellers of tourist trinkets. Like Cairo it had a flourishing postcard market and features prominently in guidebooks of all eras. Soldier-tourists would have had little difficulty in finding information on how best to visit the monuments and what might be seen in a day. Modern itineraries often intersperse a visit to either Luxor or Karnak temples on the east bank of the Nile with a trip to the Valley of the Kings or tombs of the nobles on the west, so that visitors do not become confused by a succession of temples in the same day. However, this is not the only way to see the site, and soldiers using their own resources might well have visited both temples on the east bank in the same day. The VAL collection suggests that the Luxor temple was considered a short visit and that few pictures were taken there, usually general views seen from in front of the Pylon entrance or from the riverside, whereas Karnak attracted greater attention – perhaps because of its huge size. Views here often show particular features such as the column of Taharqa (690-664 B.C.) in the first court or of the Sacred Lake. The sheer size of the monument necessitates such views rather than attempts at overall views which can really only be satisfactorily obtained from the air. That the itinerary of 1914-18 is rather different to that of today is witnessed by the photograph taken by one Lt. Sgt. Johnson (below) of the great stone scarab which had been moved from the West Bank to reside at Karnak. In recent years this has been positioned near the stalls and souvenir stands close to the Sacred Lake where guides tell visitors that it is a good-luck/fertility monument which they should walk around three times. Its rather neglected condition in Johnson's photograph, and position very close to a tree which would make such circuits difficult is an indication that the myth is a relatively recent one.

[Figure 8 here]

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<sup>37</sup> Humpreys, *Grand Hotels*, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Those sent to convalesce in Luxor may have felt less fortunate.

On the west bank the Valley of the Kings was no doubt popular, but views of it are few – largely because it would have been difficult to photograph inside the tombs themselves. The Temple of Hatshepsut (1473-1458 B.C.) at Deir el-Bahari on the other (east) side of the cliff from the Valley of the Kings presented no such problems however. The site as visited by soldiers of the Great War was very much different to that which visitors see today. The site had been excavated by Edouard Naville (1844-1926) between 1893 and 1896 and between the end of his work and the war reconstruction work had already begun such that a second tier of the monument was now being restored. The house built by Naville for his use during the excavation had also been cleared sometime between 1895 and 1914.

At the same time as visiting Deir el-Bahari visitors might go to see the Ramesseum mortuary temple of Ramesses II (1279-1213 B.C.) which some at least would have known from Shelley's sonnet 'Ozymandias'.<sup>39</sup> Only the more adventurous visitors seem to have made their way to the south to see the very well preserved temple of Ramesses III (1184-1153 B.C.) at Medinet Habu. It may not be a coincidence that most of those pictures of the site which were collected by VAL were made by Major Butchardt. As an officer he may well have had access to guidebooks such as those published by Karl Baedeker and Thomas Cook as well as greater resources to be able to leave the more common tourist routes<sup>40</sup>. Some of these guides might well have been available for consultation at some of the hotels requisitioned by the army and particularly frequented by officers.

South of the Luxor region photographs, and indeed postcards, are more scarce, reflecting the fact that the most concentrated military activity was in the north around Cairo, Alexandria, the Suez Canal and into Palestine. However, at least some soldiers did travel beyond Luxor and Major Butchardt has photographs of Kom Ombo, a site rarely featured in First World War collections. In his album one view which purports to be of the site is actually of Medinet Habu, which perhaps suggests that the time spent at Kom Ombo was brief and that he was subsequently confused over the images. Further south the Major and his colleagues visited the temple of Isis at Philae which was, at the time of their visit, partially submerged as a result of raising the height of the Aswan dam.

The monuments of Philae, like the temples of Ramesses II and Nefertari at Abu Simbel, were moved to higher ground in the 1960s in advance of the creation of Lake Nasser following the building of the Aswan High Dam. Their move recognised their importance to tourism and to the economy of Egypt. However, at the time of the First World War it was considered acceptable that for part of each year they were partially submerged behind the heightened 'low' dam. Part of the visitor experience at this time was to visit the ruins by boat, and whilst this may have been an exciting experience it was also one which was injurious to the monument as oars and boat frequently rubbed against the sandstone of the walls. It is clear from the pictures in the Butchardt collection that he visited the monument with fellow officers, as one might expect, however there are other pictures of the site which were taken by Lt. Sergeant Johnson..

Lt. Sergeant Johnson whose collection now resides in the Egypt Centre in Swansea managed to visit Philae and to photograph it. He evidently had a particular interest in ancient Egypt and his collection of images includes many sites not normally visited by soldier-tourists, including Kom Ombo. At the time of his Philae visit the waters were low and he was able to visit the

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<sup>39</sup> Beginning 'I met a traveller from an Antique Land..' the sonnet provided a name for the *Views of an Antique Land* project.

<sup>40</sup> Earnest Alfred Wallis Budge, *The Nile: Notes for Travellers in Egypt and the Egyptian Sudan* (London and Cairo: Thomas Cook, 1912).

temple on foot, though he also photographed the field plots which were established around it for the few months each year when it was above the level of the water and when the fertile silt provided an excellent growing medium.

## **Conclusion**

The consideration of service personnel as enforced tourists in Egypt and the Holy Land has attracted little academic attention. However, it is clear that the mechanisms which existed for pre-war tourism were adapted to cope with larger numbers of less affluent visitors and that these were catered for by literature which was, in some cases, specific to them. That these visitors wanted to buy souvenir postcards and to take their own photographs is apparent from the large numbers of images which survive from the period.

What has not been attempted hitherto is to try to see the images for what they are, a record of 'enforced tourism' which often illustrates, through groupings in albums, an adherence to visitor itineraries which had long been established. That some of these itineraries, such as that around Heliopolis, are now gone has much to say about the changes in the Egyptian landscape, about new discoveries and about modern trends in tourism. These are themes that merit study in greater depth, but it is evident that discoveries such as that of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 led to such sites being added to itineraries at the expense of places which were becoming built-up or which no longer offered a sufficiently exciting experience.

The photographs of Egypt and the Holy Land taken by soldiers of the First World War represent a resource for our understanding of visitors and their interests in the early twentieth century. Their importance lies in their ability to recreate for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century audience the landscape witnessed by service personnel in the 20<sup>th</sup> and offer a chance to compare the sites as they then appeared with their appearance today, and appearance which has often been shaped in order to better accommodate mass tourism. The value of these images to the archaeologist wishing to examine what are sometimes unrecorded changes is obvious.

## **Funding Acknowledgement**

This work was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund under Our Heritage Grant OH-14-04833.

Mrs. Hilary Rees served as project Officer for the project and her help has been invaluable.

We are also indebted to our many volunteers and donors who have done so much to make the project a success and who have permitted the use of their images.

The library staff at the National Portrait Gallery, London, kindly arranged for us to see the paper by "Medico".

We are also grateful to Professor Chris Williams for his help and advice with the project during his time as Head of School at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University.

The paper has benefitted from the comments made by two anonymous reviewers and we are indebted to them for their suggestions.



## Figures

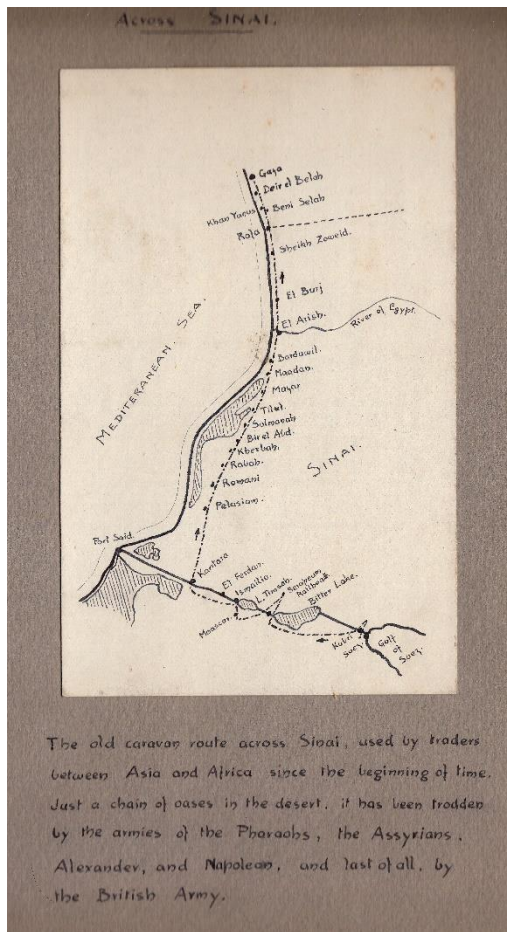


Figure 1: Hand drawn map of the old caravan route across Sinai by Herbert Standen. From the collection of Driver Herbert Standen, donated by Sue Dalton.



Figure 2: Soldiers relaxing on-board ship, some playing quoits. From the collection of Captain William Falcon, donated by David Ross.



Figure 3: Soldiers swimming in the Suez Canal. From the collection of Sapper Dewi David, donated by Rhys David. See also: Rhys David, *Tell Mum not worry. A Welsh soldier's World War One in the Near East* (Cardiff: Deffro, 2014).



Figure 4: A) Photograph of two Egyptian women, hand captioned 'Egyptian Belles' in imitation of a postcard. From the collection of Sapper Dewi David, donated by Rhys David. B) Commercial postcard showing a semi-clad Nubian woman captioned 'Omdurman Belle'. Perhaps an ethnographic equivalent of the French postcard. From the collection of the Manchester Museum.



Figure 5: Soldiers with their dragoman in front of the Sphinx. The photo number at bottom left is for the benefit of the photographer to identify customers. From the collection of Driver Daniel Rees Davies, donated by Teifion Davies.



Figure 6: Sixty-three wounded soldiers from the Mena House in front of the Sphinx, dated on the reverse 16 May 1916. The Mena House served as a hospital during the First World War. Donated by Paul T. Nicholson.





Figure 7: A) The obelisk at Heliopolis/Matarieh. From the collection of Sapper Dewi David, donated by Rhys David. B) Group of soldiers standing outside the 'Virgin's Tree' enclosure. From the collection of Sapper Dewi David, donated by Rhys David. C) The Ostrich farm at Heliopolis/Matarieh. From the collection of Sapper Dewi David, donated by Rhys David.



Figure 8: The stone scarab at Karnak then playing a less prominent tourist role that it has done in more recent times. From the collection of Lieutenant Sergeant Johnson, item accession number 1593, The Egypt Centre, Swansea University.